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A

WONDERFUL ACCOUNT

OF

Mr. George Spearing,

A Lieutenant in the Navy,

Who fell into a Coal Pit in Northwoodside, near Glasgow; where he remained Seven Days and Seven Nights, without any other Support than Rain Water.

The Surprising manner of his Deliverance, and an Account of his Behaviour while in the melancholy situation.

To which is added,

A Hymn of Praise for his Deliverance.

Published by himself, for the information of his Friends and the Public.

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WONDERFUL ACCOUNT

OF

Lieutenant GEORGE SPEARING.

ON Wednesday last, between the hours of 3 and 4 o'clock afternoon, I went into a little wood, called Northwoodside, situated between 2 and 3 miles to the south-west of Glasgow, with a design to gather a few hazel nuts.—I had not been in the wood above 15 minutes, nor gathered more than ten nuts, before I unfortunately fell into an old coal pit, exactly 51 feet deep, which had been made through a solid rock. On recovering my recollection, I found myself sitting nearly as a tailor does at his work, the blood flowing very fast from my mouth. I thought I had broken a blood vessel, and consequently, had not long to live; but, to my great comfort, I soon discovered that the blood proceeded from a wound in my tongue, which I supposed I had bitten in my fall. Looking at my watch, it was ten minutes past four; and getting up, I surveyed my limbs, and, to my inexpressible joy, found that not one of them was broken. I was soon reconciled to my situation, having from my childhood thought that something very extraordinary was to happen me in the course of my life, and I had not the least doubt of being relieved in the morning: for, the wood being but small, and situated near a populous city, it is much frequented

especially in the nut season, and there are several foot paths leading through it.

Night approached, when it began to rain, not gentle showers, but in torrents, such as at the autumnal equinox. The pit was about 5 feet in diameter, but not having been worked for several years, the subterraneous passages were choaked up, with small intermissions, till the day of my release, and in a very short time I was all over wet.

In this comfortless condition I endeavoured to take some repose. A forked stick which I found in the pit, I placed diagonally to the side of it, which served alternately to support my head as a pillow, or my body occasionally, which was much bruised; but, in the whole time I remained here, I do not think that ever I slept an hour together. Having passed a very disagreeable and tedious night, I was somewhat cheered with the appearance of day light, and the melody of a robin-red-breast, that had perched directly over the mouth of the pit; and this pretty little warbler continued to visit my quarters every morning during my confinement; which I construed into a happy omen of my deliverance. And I sincerely believe, the trust I had in Providence, and the company of this little bird, contributed much to that serenity of mind I constantly enjoyed. At the distance of about a hundred yards, in a direct line from the pit; there was a water-mill, the miller's house was nearer to me, and the road to the mill was still nearer; so that I could frequently hear the horses going on the road to and from the

Frequently I heard human voices; and I could distinctly hear the ducks and hens about the mill. I made the best use of my voice on every occasion but it was to no manner of purpose; for the wind, which was constantly high, blew in a line from the mill to the pit, which easily accounts for what I heard; and, at the same time, my voice was carried the contrary way.

I cannot say I suffered much from hunger; after two or three days my appetite ceased, but my thirst was intolerable; and though it almost constantly rained yet I could not, till the third or fourth day preserve a drop of it, as the earth at the bottom of the pit sucked it up as fast as it ran down. In this distress I sucked my clothes; but from them I could extract but little moisture.—The shock I received in the fall together with the dislocation of one of my ribs, kept me, I imagine in a continual fever; I cannot otherwise account for my suffering so much more from thirst than I did from hunger. At last I discovered the thigh bone of a bull almost covered with earth, which I was afterwards informed, fell into the pit 18 years before me. I dug it up, and the large end of it left a cavity that, I suppose, might contain a quart. This the water gradually drained into, but so very slowly, that it was a considerable time before I could dip a nutshell full at a time, which I emptied into the palm of my hand, and so drank it. The water now began to increase pretty fast, so that I was very glad to enlarge my reservoir, insomuch, that on the 4th or 5th day, I had a sufficient supply; and this water was certainly the preservation of my life.

At the bottom of the pit there were great quantities of reptiles, such as frogs, toads, large black snails, or slugs, &c. These noxious creatures would frequently crawl about me, and often get into my reservoir; nevertheless, I thought it the sweetest water I had ever tasted; and, at this distance of time, the remembrance of it is so sweet, that, were it now possible to obtain any of it, I am sure I could swallow it with avidity. I have frequently taken both frogs and toads out of my neck, where, I suppose they took shelter while I slept. The toads I always destroyed, but the frogs I carefully preserved, as I did not know but I might be under the necessity of eating them, as I should not have scrupled to have done, had I been very hungry.

Saturday the 6th, there fell but little rain, and I had the satisfaction to hear the voices of some boys in the wood. Immediately I called out with all my might, but it was all in vain, though I afterwards learned that they actually heard me; but being prepossessed with an idle story, of a wild man being in the wood, they ran away very much terrified.

Sunday the 17th was my birth day, when I completed my 41st year; and I think it was the next day that some of my acquaintance, having accidentally heard that I had gone the way I did, sent two or three porters out purposely to search the pits for me. These men went to the miller's house, and made enquiry for me; but, on account of the great rain at the time, they never entered the wood, but cruelly returned to their employers, telling them they had searched the

pits, and that I was not to be found. Many people in my dismal situation would have died in despair; but, I thank God, I enjoyed a perfect serenity of mind; so much so, that on the Tuesday afternoon, and when I had been six nights in the pit, I very composedly, by way of amusement, fell to combing my wig upon my knee, humming a tune, and thinking on Archer in the play called the Beaux Stratagem.

At length the morning, September 20th, the happy morning for my deliverance came! a day, that while my memory lasts, I will always celebrate with gratitude to heaven. Through the brambles and bushes that covered the mouth of the pit, I could discover the sun shining bright, and my pretty warbler was chanting his melodious strains, when my attention was roused by a confused noise of human voices, which seemed to be approaching fast towards the pit. Immediately I called out, and most agreeably surprised many of my acquaintance, were in search of me. As soon as they heard my voice, they all run towards the pit, and I could distingnish a well known voice exclaim, 'Good God! he is still living.' Another of them, a very honest North Briton, betwixt his surprise and joy, could not help asking me, in the Hibernian style, if I was still living? I called out that I was, and hearty too; and then gave them particular directions how to proceed in getting me out.

Fortunately, at that juncture, a Collier belonging to a working pit in the neighbourhood, was passing along the road, and hearing the unusual noise in the wood, curiosity led him to enquire

into the cause of it; by his assistance, and a rope which was then procured from the mill, I was soon safely landed on *terra firma* (continent or main land). The miller's wife very kindly brought some milk warm from the cow; but, on my coming into the fresh air, I grew faint, and could not taste it. Need I be ashamed to acknowledge, that the first dictates of my heart prompted me to fall on my knees, and ejaculate my thanksgiving to the God of my deliverance, since, at this distant time, I never think of it but the tear of gratitude starts from my eye.

Every morning while I was in the pit, I tied a knot on the corner of my handkerchief, supposing that, if I died there, and my body should be afterwards found, the numbers of the knots would certify how many days I had lived. Almost the first question my friends asked me was, How long I had been in the pit? I immediately drew my handkerchief from my pocket, and desired them to count the knots, on which they found seven, the exact number of nights, I had been there.

I was conveyed home, and every means used for strengthening my limbs, which were much benumbed with the damp and coldness of the pit; but, through the ignorance of my physicians, a mortification seized both my feet, by which the flesh and all the nails of my left foot, and three from my right foot, came off like a glove. The flesh at the bottom of my foot being separated from the bone, I had it cut off; and it was nine months after this before I recovered. I have since been the father of nine children.

L. G. Spearing's Hymn of Praise.

Almighty God, who on this day
My life from death didst save,
To thee I now presume to pray,
And future blessings crave.

Oh! grant I ever may confess
Thy goodness shewn to me;
With grateful tears and tongue express
The praise that's due to thee.

While in the dreary pit I lay,
My life thou didst sustain;
And to my comfort, I may say,
Thou gavest refreshing rain.

In this thy providential care
Is to the world made known,
And teaches us to shun despair,
For thou art God alone.

Then since my life thou didst preserve,
Oh! teach me how to live;
Let me not from thy precepts swerve:
This blessing to me give.

So will I yearly on this day,
My grateful tribute bring,
In humble thanks to thee alway,
My Saviour, God, and King.